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TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Commission. I want to thank the Commission for highlighting today the problem of gender-based violence, as well as the good work being done at U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), by our colleagues at the State Department, and by the non-governmental organizations here today.

The Problem

Gender-based violence cuts across ethnicity, race, class, religion, education level, and international borders. An estimated one in three women worldwide is beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women globally. An appalling 38% of all murders of women globally were reported being committed by their intimate partners. Gender-based violence can also take the form of harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation, so-called “honor killings,” bride abductions, and child marriage. An estimated 10 million girls are married every year before they reach 18. Child marriage is a practice that increases a girl’s risk of school dropout, maternal mortality, short birth intervals, and vulnerability to other forms of gender-based violence, among other adverse outcomes. Children are particularly vulnerable to violence, especially sexual abuse. According to the United Nations Population Fund, almost 50 percent of all sexual assaults worldwide are against girls 15 and younger. In 2002, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 years experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence. Sexual violence is also often used as a tactic of war during conflicts. In the context of humanitarian crises and emergencies, civilian women and children are often the most vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and abuse because of their gender, age, and status in society. Women with a disability are two to three times more likely to suffer physical and sexual abuse than women with no disability. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons also face heightened risk.

Gender-based violence undermines not only the safety, dignity, overall health status, and human rights of the millions of individuals who experience it, but also the public health, economic stability, and security of nations. A USAID funded study in Bangladesh found that the cost of domestic violence is equivalent to two percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product – nearly equal to the amount of the government’s annual expenditures in health and nutrition. Developing countries are not alone in bearing this enormous cost. The United Nations Secretary-General’s 2005 in-depth study on violence against women found that when calculated across 13 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Finland, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States) this cost amounted to USD 50 billion per year.

USAID’s New Strategic Position on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

For over two decades, USAID has partnered with non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and host government institutions to increase awareness of the scope of the problem and its impact, improve services for survivors of violence, and strengthen prevention efforts. Under the Obama Administration, the United States has put gender equality and the advancement of women and

girls at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy. The Administration put in place several policies and strategies that align with the proposed International Violence Against Women Act.

Over the last two years USAID has reinvigorated and strengthened its work on gender equality and women's empowerment., launching a number of new synergistic policies and strategies at the national level to bolster our efforts, including the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, the U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity, Counter-Trafficking in Persons Policy, and USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. These have all highlighted our commitment as a government to address gender-based violence.

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy

Although many gender gaps have narrowed over the past two decades, substantial inequalities remain across every development priority worldwide – from political participation to economic inclusion – and remain a significant challenge across all sectors in which USAID works, particularly in the most low-income and conflict-affected countries and among disadvantaged groups. The Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, released in March 2012, strengthens our capacity to support women and girls by ensuring our efforts are integrated and based in rigorous analysis – and knits together all our gender policies to ensure that they are working together.

Building on the Agency's decades of experience, the new policy provides guidance to our staff in Washington and in the field on pursuing more effective, evidence-based investments in gender equality and female empowerment and incorporating these efforts into our core development programming. The policy focuses USAID investments on three overarching outcomes:

- Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services - economic, social, political, and cultural;
- Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals; and
- Increase capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

In December 2011, in support of the UN Security Council-adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, USAID along with other USG agencies developed the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security. USAID is investing in gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis and conflict-affected countries to promote the rights and well-being of women and girls and to foster peaceful, resilient communities that can cope with adversity and pursue development gains. We are changing the way we do business and implementing programs across the spectrum of crisis prevention, response, recovery, and transition to advance the five objectives outlined in the National Action Plan: (1) Institutionalize a Gender-Responsive Approach to Peace and Security; (2) Promote Women's Participation in Peace Processes and Decision- Making; (3) Protect Women and Girls from Violence, Exploitation, and Abuse; (4) Engage Women in Conflict Prevention; and (5) Ensure Safe, Equitable Access to Relief and Recovery.

United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally

The United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally was developed in August 2012 in collaboration with agencies across the U.S. Government to establish a government-wide approach that identifies, coordinates, integrates, and leverages current efforts and resources. It sets concrete goals and actions to be implemented and monitored by federal agencies.

USAID is working to build on its global reach and expertise in development and humanitarian assistance to maximize the impact of Agency efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Our goals are an increased share of the population that views gender-based violence as unacceptable and USAID resources focused on strategically addressing the most prevalent forms of gender-based violence in each country where we work.

USAID is committed to developing and implementing effective measures for preventing and responding to gender-based violence and changing the behaviors that perpetuate it. The Agency recognizes the need to focus on gender-based violence prevention, especially by elevating the voices of local actors, including civil society organizations, to address the underlying traditions, social norms, and cultural beliefs that perpetuate, condone, and exacerbate gender-based violence, gender inequality, and human rights violations or abuses.

In addition, the plan directs staff to sharpen program priorities by considering gender-based violence early in the development of the mandatory Country Development Cooperation Strategies and project design. This ensures gender analysis is conducted at the appropriate time to assess and strengthen gender-based violence programming, identify and scale up successful interventions, collaborate in piloting an inter-agency approach and invest to close data gaps. Finally the plan emphasizes the importance of elevating women and girls as leaders and agents of change across all areas of programming, engaging men and boys as allies, including and addressing the needs of underserved populations, and collaborating with civil society and the private sector.

Child Marriage Vision

In October 2012, USAID developed Ending Child Marriage and Addressing the Needs of Married Adolescents: The USAID Vision for Action. In line with USAID's Implementation Plan of the Gender-based Violence Strategy, the Vision highlights the need for development efforts to combat child marriage to focus on regions, countries, and communities where interventions to prevent and respond to child marriage are most needed and most likely to achieve results.

To end child marriage and meet the needs of married children, USAID must leverage the expertise and skills of local change agents and international stakeholders, and maximize the impact of established best practices. USAID's Vision for Action provides guidance for our staff to end child marriage, ensure that boys and girls can reach their full potential, foster gender equality, and promote girls empowerment.

U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity

Crafted in coordination with seven U.S. Government departments and agencies — the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Labor, and State, USAID, and Peace Corps— the December 2012 Action Plan on Children in Adversity is the first-ever whole-of-government strategic guidance on international assistance for children in adversity. Children in adversity include those affected by HIV/AIDS, in disasters, or who are orphans, trafficked, exploited for child labor, recruited as soldiers, neglected, or in other vulnerable states. This effort builds on the success USAID investments in child survival, integrating assistance and measuring results to ensure that children ages 0-18 not only survive, but thrive. The Action Plan aligns different funding sources across the participating agencies and vulnerability categories for children with three principal objectives: (1) Build Strong Beginnings: Increase percentage of children surviving and reaching full developmental

potential. (2) Put Family Care First: Reduce percentage of children living outside of family care. (3) Protect Children: Reduce percentage of girls and boys exposed to violence and exploitation.

USAID Counter-Trafficking in Persons Policy

In February 2012, USAID launched a new Counter-Trafficking in Persons Policy to reinvigorate and focus Agency efforts to combat trafficking on concrete, measurable principles and objectives. We are also expanding investments in countries with global strategic importance and significant trafficking problems, and are strengthening Counter-Trafficking in Persons programming in conflict- and crisis-affected areas. Our programs draw upon innovation, technology and private-sector partnerships.

Institutionalizing Gender-conscious Programming

Awareness, sensitization, training, and technical assistance

USAID has made great strides in institutionalizing the awareness of gender-related considerations in programming and raising consciousness regarding the need to address gender inequality to achieve the attitudinal and behavioral changes needed to cement development gains. As staff understand the need to pay attention to gender inequality, they are increasingly seeking resources to help them learn how to improve their programming. Currently, over 1,000 staff have taken either online or in person trainings related to gender equality. In addition, through mandatory orientation training for new civil service and foreign service employees as well as at a June 2013 workshop for foreign service officers from around the world, USAID has trained over 500 USAID personnel on Counter-Trafficking in Persons and the Code of Conduct. In order to train the majority of the Agency on gender equality and female empowerment issues, USAID developed and launched the Gender 101 online staff training module and offers in-person regional trainings. Two more online courses are being developed.

USAID missions can also tap into technical assistance through mechanisms and personnel in Washington with expertise on gender-based violence. Our technical experts help missions sharpen their program priorities and review mission work with an eye to integration of gender-based violence prevention and response strategies. Because USAID has found that an efficient way of encouraging integration of policy guidance is development of toolkits targeted to particular sectors, there are two new toolkits under development - focused on integrating gender-based violence prevention and response into economic growth programs, and rule of law projects.

Amending USAID's Automated Directives System

The policies and procedures that guide USAID's programs and operations are contained in a reference compendium called the Automated Directives System (ADS). In July 2013 USAID issued ADS Chapter 205, Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle. This new chapter explains how to implement policies and strategies to reduce gender inequality across the Program Cycle and applies to all policy and operations in Washington and the field. It also elaborates on the requirements in ADS 201, 202, and 203 for integrating gender equality and women's empowerment in all phases of programming, budgeting, and reporting. We also anticipate changes that reflect the requirements of the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment policy in the ADS 300 and 400 series to come out in the near future.

Amending Reporting Requirements

Reporting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in budgets and performance management is a requirement of a suite of State and USAID policies. Subsequent to the release of the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security and the GBV Strategy, the guidance was revised to specify

what type of gender-based violence operating units are addressing and, to the extent possible, the location they are working in. This guidance includes nine standard indicators for operating units to use, three of which are specific to gender-based violence. These indicators allow us to better track the focus of investments and monitor progress.

Incentive funding

USAID established an incentive fund in 2013 to encourage missions to integrate gender-based violence prevention and response efforts into their portfolios, with an emphasis on building upon existing activities that can have a broadly transformative impact and are good candidates for scale-up. Twenty-three missions submitted proposals, evidence of great interest from our missions to address gender-based violence, and seven missions received FY2013 incentive fund awards.

Promising Programming and Results

I am pleased to highlight for you positive results we are seeing from an illustrative sampling of programs worldwide.

Health

USAID invests in both prevention and response to child marriage because marriage before the age of 18 is a practice that undermines efforts to promote sustainable development – including in health, where child marriage increases the risk of maternal mortality, obstetric complications, infant mortality and malnutrition compared to children of mothers older than 18.

An example of an integrated and multi-sectoral program to address child marriage is the Meseret Hiwott program in Ethiopia. Leveraging programs funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Ethiopia's Amhara Region, USAID has reached more than 220,000 married adolescent girls since 2008 through the Population Council's Meseret Hiwott program, which involves the formation of girls groups which meet 3-5 times a week to discuss issues of family planning, reproductive health, power dynamics, financial literacy, and access to HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections services. Parallel Addis Birhan programs for married adolescent boys host discussion groups focused on the same topics, as well as partner communications, non-violent and respectful relations, and caring for wives and children.

An example of a stand-alone child marriage program is the Safe Age of Marriage Project, a USAID-supported program in rural Yemen that used community mobilization efforts to increase age of marriage. This project included awareness sessions at schools, mobile clinics, and community venues on the importance of keeping girls unmarried – and culminated in a community pledge to ban child marriage and set marriage dowry at 400,000 Yemeni Riyals to deter trade marriage. As a result, the most commonly reported age of marriage among girls aged 10 to 17 rose from 14 to 17 over the duration of the project. The project also helped avert 53 girl-child and 26 boy-child marriages and helped to appoint the first-ever female school principal in Al Sawd District. This community mobilization intervention is now being replicated in two new districts of Yemen.

Rule of Law and Democracy, Rights, and Governance

Many countries understand that strengthening the Rule of Law can assist in preventing gender-based violence, and have developed good laws. However, where many countries fall short is in implementing the laws, which is critical to deterring future gender-based violence.

In Guatemala, USAID provided technical assistance, training, and equipment to operationalize a new specialized 24-hour court located in the Attorney General's Office for cases related to violence against women, exploitation, sexual violence and human trafficking. The new model opened in October 2012 and includes a criminal court, a public defense office, a police substation, and a forensic clinic, and is staffed by prosecutors, psychologists, doctors, and lawyers. The integrated approach ensures victims receive the timely assistance they need and strengthens criminal investigation by using scientific evidence. This court, one of the first in Latin America, represents a fundamental change in Guatemala's justice system. Since the 24-hour court opened its doors, 846 protection measures for women and 307 arrest warrants have been authorized. In total, 125 people have been sent to prison for violence against women and sexual exploitation.

In Ethiopia, we worked with village elders, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association and the Ministry of Justice to raise awareness about harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital cutting. This advocacy work resulted in the ratification of a new law increasing the legal age of marriage from 16 to 18.

Education

When girls are educated, their families are healthier, they have fewer children, they wed later, and they have more opportunities to generate income. One extra year of primary school boosts a girl's future wage 10 to 20 percent and an extra year of secondary school increases that earning potential by 15 to 25 percent. Education also helps mothers take better care of their children. According to the World Bank, each additional year of female education reduces child mortality by 18 per thousand births.

USAID's Safe Schools Pilot Program worked to reduce school-related gender-based violence in selected schools in Ghana and Malawi to support the longer-term goal of improving educational and health outcomes for girls and boys. Changes in student and teacher knowledge, attitudes and practices toward school-related gender-based violence were used to measure progress toward reducing violence. The program provided over 30,000 girls and boys with prevention programs and support services. By the end of the project, teachers and students exhibited changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices. In Ghana, prior to the program, roughly 30 percent of teachers agreed that sexual harassment of girls occurred in schools; after the program that number increased to nearly 80 percent. Teachers' belief that boys could experience sexual harassment increased by 38 percent—from 26 to 64 percent. This awareness is a critical first step in prevention.

The Safe Schools pilot was scaled up to include activities in the Dominican Republic, Senegal, Yemen, Tajikistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Training manuals were translated into Spanish, French, Arabic, Tajik and Russian and adapted to the local context. Furthermore, USAID formed a partnership with the Peace Corps to use the Safe Schools materials and train volunteers on how to create a safe classroom environment, integrate gender-equitable practices into teaching and classroom management, and promote primary school reading.

Economic Growth

In South Africa, USAID is supporting the scale-up of the Intervention With Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) Project. The IMAGE project sought to find evidence about the scope of women's empowerment and the mechanisms underlying the significant reduction in intimate partner violence documented by the cluster-randomized trial in rural South Africa. The findings, both qualitative and quantitative, indicate that economic and social empowerment of women can contribute to reductions in intimate partner violence. The IMAGE intervention combined a microfinance program

with participatory training on understanding HIV infection, gender norms, domestic violence, and sexuality.

After 2 years, the risk of past-year physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner was reduced by more than half. Reductions in violence resulted from a range of responses enabling women to challenge the acceptability of violence, expect and receive better treatment from partners, leave abusive relationships, and raise public awareness about intimate partner violence.

The project was scaled up in various phases from 2001 onwards. During its trial period (2001-2004), the intervention was delivered to 860 women and scaled up by mid-2007 to reach 3,000 households in more than 100 villages. After the impact evaluation in 2008, a new institutional structure was designed to reach 15,000 households by 2011-2012 in a high risk area surrounding proposed mining developments in South Africa's rural northeast. USAID will support further scale-up of IMAGE from 2012-2015, and it will cover 6,000 additional microfinance loans.

Innovation and Technology

In India, USAID is expanding the use of innovative CommCare mobile technology to address gender-based violence effectively and uniformly in primary health care settings. This approach builds on a pilot program currently underway in Bengaluru to apply mobile technology for facilitating and monitoring identification, counseling and referral of gender-based violence cases in municipal primary health centers.

In response to President Obama's October 2012 call to action, USAID launched the Counter-Trafficking in Persons Campus Challenge Tech Contest (www.challengeslavery.org), growing a community of over two thousand students from around the world to explore innovative technological solutions to combat trafficking in persons. To deepen that effort, USAID launched a Challenge Slavery Tech Contest in Ukraine this October. Implemented by MTV EXIT along with designated youth ambassadors, the contest is soliciting innovative ideas for the use of technology to raise awareness and promote social action to combat trafficking in persons in Ukraine.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Crisis and Conflict

USAID is working to strengthen gender-based violence prevention and response through a range of humanitarian and development activities designed to mitigate risks of gender-based violence, provide comprehensive services for survivors, combat impunity, and promote women's participation in critical peace and transition processes.

All USAID humanitarian assistance programs seek to reach the most vulnerable populations—women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly—who often face extraordinary levels of violence and abuse. Sadly, women and children often fare the worst in war, and the crisis in Syria is no exception. Gender-based violence is a serious concern for Syrians. To address this, we're supporting medical services for gender-based violence survivors through women's health centers, mobile clinics, and outreach teams that provide health and psychosocial services to women who desperately need it. In addition to these targeted interventions, we require all of our programs – no matter what type of humanitarian assistance they are providing – to ensure that they are meeting the unique needs of vulnerable populations and promoting their safety. Simple solutions can be life-changing: instead of setting up women's bathing spaces in a camp, which women and girls feel shy about using, our partners

are setting up multi-purpose women's spaces, in which women and girls can bathe, wash clothes, wash dishes and socialize.

Similarly, in response to Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, USAID is working with our humanitarian partners to identify and mitigate protection risks through our health, food, relief commodities, and water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance activities. The Disaster Assistance Response Team in the Philippines is closely monitoring protection risks, including gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, and USAID has deployed a protection advisor to support our partners in addressing these concerns.

The U.S. Government has a strong commitment to protecting women and girls through humanitarian action but we recognize that there is still more work for us to do as a government and as an international community. In September, Secretary Kerry announced a new \$10 million initiative called Safe from the Start. This initiative is a joint effort between USAID and our colleagues in the State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration. It builds on the momentum of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security and the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence Globally. What is unique about Safe from the Start is that it is focusing our efforts on gender-based violence prevention and response at the very outset of emergencies. The goal is to permanently transform the global humanitarian architecture so that women and girls are never needlessly at risk in emergencies and that survivors receive appropriate care – not as an afterthought but as standard practice.

In the past year, USAID programs have reached more than 1 million survivors of gender-based violence and girls at risk of violence with medical, psychosocial, legal, and economic assistance in countries affected by conflict and natural disaster. These services are critical for helping survivors recover and rebuild their lives, and prevent recurrent cycles of violence and victimization. USAID is investing in building the evidence base for survivor-centered services that can be successful even in difficult, low-resource settings.

For example, in FY 2012, USAID's Victims of Torture program supported 43,000 survivors of violence in eastern DRC with integrated services, including psychosocial counseling and opportunities to join savings and loan associations. USAID-supported research on the mental health components of this program published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* documented positive results for survivors participating in therapy. In the study, women from 16 villages in DRC, who had experienced or witnessed sexual violence and showed symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, were randomly assigned to receive individual support or group cognitive processing therapy (CPT). Compared to women who received individual support, women who received group CPT showed a stronger reduction of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and combined depression and anxiety symptoms at the end of treatment. The percentage of women participating in group CPT that met criteria for these conditions dropped from 70% at baseline to 10% or less after treatment; the percentage of women in the individual support group who met those criteria only dropped from 83% at baseline to 42-53% after treatment. This type of learning is helping us scale-up and adapt successful approaches in crisis and conflict environments.

Even as we strengthen our support for survivors, we know that impunity for conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence is a major challenge for prevention. This year USAID provided funding to support a state-of-the art training with Justice Rapid Response on the investigation of gender-based violence under international law. The training expanded the number and

regional diversity of experts available to serve on a dedicated roster of gender-based violence experts that provides the international community with a rapidly-deployable, stand-by capacity to investigate these crimes. The training focused on Middle East and North Africa-region experts and Arabic-speaking interpreters—a region where this is great need for this expertise right now. Already several of the participants are serving or preparing to serve on the commissions of inquiry looking into allegations of human rights violations in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Another focus of USAID efforts is building the capacity of local institutions—both government and civil society—to address gender-based violence. In the next year, we’re planning programming to improve the response of police to incidents and implement a network of safe shelter options for gender-based violence survivors in Sierra Leone and to support inclusive transitional justice in Northern Uganda through support for documentation, reporting, and prosecution of crimes committed against women and girls during the conflict in that region.

Finally, I want to note the strong connection between today’s topic and women’s participation and empowerment within decision-making processes -- peace negotiations, transition dialogues, donor conferences focused on post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction. We know that women’s participation broadens the scope of peace agreements and increases the likelihood that gender-based violence will be addressed in transitional justice, constitutional drafting, security sector reform, reconstruction, and other activities that are happening in transitional societies. We are working with our State Department colleagues to bring diplomatic and development resources to bear to support inclusive peace and transition processes to ensure that women have a voice in these important decisions. USAID, for example, is supporting a program called the Global Women’s Leadership Fund with partners to increase women’s ability to influence some of the most consequential political processes in developing and post-conflict countries. In addition to providing logistical support for women’s participation in a number of high-level proceedings, the Global Women’s Leadership Fund has conducted activities in places such as Côte d’Ivoire, Burma, Libya, and Yemen, as well as provided opportunities for Syrian women to gather and strategize about increasing women’s influence and input in planning for a peaceful, democratic future for Syria.

Ongoing and Future Efforts to Address Continued Need

Operationalizing key country strategy

USAID has developed a critical priority country list to focus its programmatic priorities in preventing and addressing gender-based violence. This was done through an assessment of the prevalence of selected forms of gender-based violence, mission capacity, and host country will and capacity. The priority countries will be expected to examine the extent to which their investments are strategic and transformative and to explore gender-based violence integration into their existing programming and will be eligible for additional funding and technical assistance.

Harvesting results and creating virtuous cycle

Building off the lessons from Safe Schools, USAID is scaling up its work to prevent school-related gender-based violence through the Empowering Adolescent Girls to Lead through Education (EAGLE) project. USAID and PEPFAR are working together to ensure thousands of adolescent girls in the DRC make successful transitions to secondary school. Just 11 percent of Congolese women over age 25 have secondary educations, and studies show that keeping girls in school dramatically reduces their vulnerability to HIV and improves overall health outcomes. A five-year \$15 million initiative, EAGLE seeks to raise this rate by tackling many of the barriers keeping girls from continuing their post-primary

educations – including cost and school safety – by improving knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding sexual gender-based violence prevention and response, and gender equality within schools. The program will emphasize leadership training and increase self-efficacy regarding life choices for girls.

Capture results and enable learning across the Agency

The Agency has made significant contributions in the area of data collection and analysis through support of tools such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, which routinely collect essential data on fertility, family planning, maternal child health, gender, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and malaria. Since 1984, more than 260 surveys have been collected in over 90 countries. The Agency continues to support the development of key research.

USAID's research agenda aims to help inform some identified gaps in existing data collection and research on the following topics, among many others: (1) identifying strategies for scaling up effective gender-based violence programs through a literature review and field research in the sectors of education and youth, economic growth, democracy and government and health; (2) developing monitoring and evaluation tools for gender-based violence interventions in pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis phases; (3) investigating the relationship between women's economic empowerment and gender-based violence, and identify promising programmatic approaches that support women's economic empowerment and reduce the risk of gender-based violence; (4) investigating the effectiveness of financial and economic incentives (such as conditional cash transfers) in preventing child marriage in high-prevalence areas of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; and (5) engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

In closing, USAID is hard at work refining our tools and interventions to effectively address gender-based violence, and we appreciate the contributions of many of our colleagues in this room as we fight this scourge that undermines our development goals and offends human dignity. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.